

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



Reserve

A56.7  
S03C



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LIBRARY



Reserve

BOOK NUMBER A56.7  
So3C

914361

## COMMITTEE REPORT ON

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND SCS RELATIONSHIPSCharge:

Since the Service's primary function in conservation operations is to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers through soil conservation districts, the effectiveness of our work depends directly on our relationships with districts and on their leadership. Our goal is to have outstanding relationships with all districts and their associations.

It is becoming apparent that new problems in district-SCS relationship are arising in those soil conservation districts where extensive urban development is taking place. Appropriate study should be given to this item.

The Committee should give study to ways and means for the SCS and district officials to constantly work toward outstanding relationships as a plan for action.

This committee report is for the purpose of offering some suggestions on ways to improve the relationships of the Soil Conservation Service, soil conservation districts, and agencies that work with them. It is realized that many of these suggestions will not apply in all states, in all situations. As a matter of fact, most of these recommendations are based on the result of successful application in one or more states.

The Committee believes there are four fundamentals that are essential to good Soil Conservation Service-soil conservation district relations if the conservation program is to move forward at a satisfactory rate:

1. Soil Conservation Service personnel and soil conservation district supervisors must know, understand, and appreciate the duties, responsibilities, and plans of both organizations.

The two organizations have entered into a partnership arrangement on conservation work. This partnership can work successfully only when each partner is kept fully informed by the other at all times.





Federal laws give the Soil Conservation Service, and State laws give the soil conservation districts certain duties and responsibilities in soil and water conservation. These complement each other in responsibility, one being Federal, the other State. From time to time the Soil Conservation Service has been given additional responsibilities with the passage of new laws, such as the small watersheds act, the Soil Bank, loans for conservation activities, etc. Responsibilities of the Soil Conservation Service are also changed occasionally by new regulations and executive orders by the Secretary of Agriculture. State laws of soil conservation districts are also subject to change.

The memorandum of understanding between the soil conservation district, the Department of Agriculture, and the Soil Conservation Service lists in broad terms what the Soil Conservation Service and districts each will do, but is not in enough detail for year-to-year and day-to-day guidance. Therefore:

- a. It is recommended that the Soil Conservation Service at the national level issue a statement setting forth responsibilities in working with soil conservation districts on such items as Public 46, Public Law 566, Soil Bank, ACP, etc. At the state level more detailed instructions should be issued in keeping with the Washington policy, setting forth responsibilities of the area conservationist and work unit conservationist in working with soil conservation districts on these matters.
- b. It is recommended that the state conservationist call to the attention of the state agency responsible for districts and the state associations of soil conservation districts the responsibility of there being developed or revised a handbook which would provide up-to-date information on the duties and responsibilities of district governing bodies in the state. This should include their authorities, responsibilities, functions, procedure for elections, limits of supervisors' responsibilities in relation to Soil Conservation Service administration, Extension Service, and ASC county committee responsibilities, etc. This might be done by a state-by-state amendment to "My Guide Book."
- c. It is recommended that the state conservationist call to the attention of the state agency responsible for districts and the state association of soil conservation districts the desirability of arranging to assist district supervisors in becoming better acquainted with their duties and responsibilities.

- 311561
- d. The Soil Conservation Service should see that all employees, old and new, understand and appreciate responsibilities of both the Soil Conservation Service and soil conservation districts. Soil Conservation Service training centers should include this as a regular phase of training.
  - e. It is recommended that state conservationists instruct work unit conservationists to call to the attention of district officials the desirability of reviewing the duties of both organizations. State conservationists should call this matter to the attention of the president of the state district association suggesting that he write to district officials regarding it. Reviews should be held at least once a year to clarify any new responsibilities of either organization and how they may affect district operations, personnel time, etc.
  - f. A representative of soil conservation districts should be invited to attend Soil Conservation Service meetings for planning conservation operations.
  - g. The Committee is in full agreement with the plan of designating a work unit conservationist to represent the Service with district governing bodies; however, we believe it highly desirable that area conservationists maintain an active contact with district governing bodies. They should personally know all members of the board and should attend two or three of their monthly meetings per year for the purpose of giving direct supervision to the work unit conservationist on relations with the district. It should be remembered that good relations with soil conservation districts is the responsibility at all levels of our organization. Working relations with districts should be a part of the measured job of the work unit conservationist. The responsibility for working relations with all districts in his area rests with the area conservationist since he is responsible for the training and supervision of all work unit conservationists in the performance of this highly important duty.

- h. The state conservationists should periodically inform state soil conservation district associations and State committees of changes in the Service program, such as assignment of new responsibilities under the small watersheds program, the Soil Bank, etc., and how they would affect Service operations in districts. State conservationists will have the responsibility of seeing that all districts are kept informed either directly or through area and work unit conservationists. Periodically they should also review with these groups Soil Conservation Service total responsibilities, activities, and resources, together with broad plans of the Service.
2. Soil conservation district supervisors and Soil Conservation Service personnel must know what the total conservation job is and develop a plan of action together annually.

Soil conservation district supervisors develop a program and a work plan prior to the beginning of operations in the district. These documents usually contain the best appraisal at the time of the total number of farms, acres in crops, pasture, and woodland, and recognition of the types of practices needed for each land use. Specific amounts of conservation practices generally are not known at that time, however. As operations get underway, there becomes a greater need each year to take a very careful look at the kinds of jobs the district should be spending time and resources on. There is seldom enough personnel to do all the things that different cooperators want done. Questions often arise about what should be done first.

Each year the Soil Conservation Service has been making an annual plan of operations including goals of various jobs and practices for the twelve months ahead. Although there has been some degree of coordination and meshing of these goals with district plans, it is believed there is room for much improvement in this area of operations.

- a. An inventory of the total conservation jobs should be determined in cooperation with other agencies in the district as rapidly as possible. (This is in keeping with the Department of Agriculture's undertaking to develop a National Inventory of Soil and Water Conservation Needs.) Until such time as the Departmental survey is completed, district governing bodies should develop the best available information on conservation needs in their districts. They will also need to adjust the Departmental survey to fit district boundaries.



- b. It is recommended that the determination of the annual work load be a joint undertaking of the SCS work unit staff and district officials (supervisors, directors, or commissioners). Prior to meeting with the district officials to complete the tabulation, it is appropriate for the SCS work unit staff to:
- (1) List the planning and application jobs that old cooperators are ready, willing and able to do in the year ahead (this information should be accumulated throughout the year through regular and special contacts).
  - (2) List the soil survey job in the year ahead including the acreage to be surveyed to meet publication plans, needs of FHA borrowers, etc.
  - (3) Estimate the jobs to be done (after eliminating duplications) as result of ACP referrals. This estimate should be made in cooperation with the county ASC committee and, if possible, the district officials.
  - (4) Estimate the jobs to be done under the Soil Bank program. This estimate should be made in cooperation with the county ASC committee and, if possible, the district officials.
- Note: In order to save time at the meeting with the district officials, the analysis of the work load tabulated under the 4 items listed above should be made, ie, the jobs should be distributed to the kinds and grades of SCS and other personnel needed to meet the work load.
- (5) In a joint meeting, with the district officials complete the tabulation of the annual work load by adding the jobs to be done as a result of decisions only the district is in a position to make concerning:
    - (a) The number of new district cooperators to be sought in the year ahead.
    - (b) The rate at which these new cooperators should be assisted.
    - (c) The group enterprises (or facilities) that should be planned or applied during the year ahead.

- (d) Watershed (566) application(s) to be prepared.
- (e) Needed emphasis on management practices to keep the program in balance.

Note: This joint meeting should be held in late November or early December and the analysis (distribution of the jobs to the kind and grade of SCS and personnel) should also be completed at this meeting. If the analysis is made in hours or days, it should be converted to man years so at the end of this meeting both the SCS work unit staff and the district officials will know how many men and the kind and grade needed to help with the work the district and its cooperators are ready, able, and willing to do in the year ahead.

As soon as the work unit conservationist receives word back from the area conservationist on the staff likely to be available to assist the district in the calendar year ahead another joint meeting (late December or early January) should be held to develop the work estimate and the goals. It is believed that, in most cases, the work load will be more than the personnel and resources estimated to be available can do. In these cases, the district officials can decide on the jobs they want the personnel to give priority to in the year ahead. The district officials can also decide on ways and means to enlist the help of others such as equipment dealers, county agents, vocational agriculture teachers, the press, radio, television, farm organizations, and similar groups. Realistic goals for the year ahead should be based on the work estimates plus increases resulting from planned improvements and putting available, previously unused resources to work.

- c. It is recommended that the SCS help districts develop usable annual work plans. They should be brief, real, and readable. Where this is done, the work unit conservationists' annual plan of operations might well consist of the actions and the timing of his actions to meet the goals developed in cooperation with the soil conservation district. The districts will on the other hand include items in their work plans that are solely the responsibility of districts. Developing the goals together (other agencies may be invited, too) allows for maximum coordination and meshing of operations plans by district supervisors,

SCS personnel, and others who want to actively cooperate with the districts. The Committee believes "My Guide Book", developed by the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the South Carolina Association of Soil Conservation Districts is an excellent outline for a plan of action. SCS personnel should lend their full encouragement to use of this guide book.

- d. It is recommended that the work unit conservationists check with the board of supervisors as necessary during the year to determine what changes need to be made as conditions change, and to keep work moving in an orderly fashion as planned. Where district equipment operations are heavy, this may need to be monthly; in other cases it may not need to be more often than quarterly or six months.
  - e. Districts and the Service should never lose sight of the fact that their primary job is soil and water conservation planned and applied on the land. Of equal importance is the development of a basic or complete conservation plan on the entire farm or ranch. Districts and the Service should avoid getting into other activities that sidetrack them from these objectives.
  - f. The success of watershed programs under Public Law 566 will depend upon a sound combination of land treatment measures and water-control structures. Since soil conservation districts are the only agencies having facilities to do a complete job of these combined measures, it is felt that local leadership in the promotion of these projects should be actively assumed by district governing bodies. The National Association, State associations, and the Service should assist local boards in assuming this leadership. It may be necessary in some states to consider revision in State soil conservation district laws to give districts adequate authority for fully assuming these responsibilities.
3. In order for soil and water conservation work to progress at a satisfactory rate, there must be an adequate supply of needed resources, such as personnel, equipment, and materials.

Practically all funds received by the Service from Congress for conservation operations are made available for employment of



personnel who assist farmers and ranchers through soil conservation districts. Funds appropriated to the Service for use on small watersheds are made available through local sponsoring agencies, one of which is usually a soil conservation district. Soil conservation districts in a few states receive a direct appropriation from the State Legislature for purchase of equipment and employment of personnel. A limited amount of technical assistance is made available to districts from other state and federal agencies. In addition, considerable non-technical assistance is made available to districts from outside resources. With all these various funds available to districts, progress in planning and applying conservation work on the land is still short of the rate of progress needed to conserve our soil and water resources.

A review of operations in a number of states indicates some very strong points in favor of all states providing soil conservation district funds for district operations.

- a. The Committee believes that the cost of the conservation program should be borne partly by the Federal Government, partly by the State and local governments, and partly by the landowner.
  - (1) There are many soil conservation district needs that can be met with state funds that cannot be handled with federal funds.
  - (2) Soil conservation district supervisors take a more active and positive interest when they have a responsibility for the administration of State funds.
  - (3) State funds enable districts to employ personnel to handle non-technical jobs which now go undone, or SCS personnel are asked to perform in many instances. Where districts are able to perform these clerical and managerial jobs, SCS personnel are able to operate more efficiently and spend more time providing technical help to farmers and ranchers.
- b. Districts should develop estimates of needs for local and State funds for plant materials, their production, distribution and use, expenses for attending meetings of the board, and purchase and operation of equipment not locally available that is needed for conservation work. Both the Service and soil conservation districts should be ever on the alert to locating and securing surplus equipment that might be obtained by grant and used in the district program.



- c. This active interest of district supervisors improves the setting for Soil Conservation Service--Soil Conservation District relations and results in more efficient use of Federal, as well as State funds.
  - d. It is the opinion of the Committee that both the Service and districts have a responsibility of keeping local, state and national leaders informed on the progress of soil and water conservation work that has been planned and applied with available resources, and informing them of the conservation job ahead.
4. Other people need to know and become active in the conservation job carried out through districts.

With only 13 percent of the voting population residing on the farm, it becomes increasingly important that all people -- in town as well as country -- understand the importance of maintaining our resources in the national interest. Our legislators, both Federal and State, provide funds for those projects which their constituents believe to be in their interest. Providing industry with facts about our resources and their conservation has resulted in one company sponsoring contests among soil conservation districts; another company spending a considerable sum of money sponsoring speaking contests on soil conservation; in the farm equipment industry encouraging all of their dealers to work with soil conservation districts; in state and national banking associations promoting conservation work in districts; and in state departments of education and colleges teaching courses in soil and water conservation.

This is only a partial list of those who are now actively supporting conservation work because they understand its importance to the national welfare. Conservation of soil and water is a job which should and can have the active participation of a great many groups who now know too little about it to actively help.

- a. It is recommended that the Administrator issue a numbered memorandum setting forth Service policy with respect to SCS participation and support of these various programs.

- b. It is recommended that work unit conservationists encourage districts to invite representatives of the press, radio, and television to meet with them in planning conservation publicity activities to reach all people.
- c. Work unit and area conservationists should bring to the attention of district officials the names of groups and organizations that might be in a position to assist the district. District officials should be encouraged to write special letters of invitation to such groups urging them to attend board meetings and learn more about district endeavor and participation in their activities.
- d. Work unit conservationists should encourage districts to have their annual reports liberally illustrated with photographs reproduced and distributed to individuals and groups who should know about conservation activities.
- e. Work unit conservationists should encourage districts, with the help of interested agencies and groups to continue to sponsor tours showing applied soil and water conservation work.
- f. SCS personnel should never forget to mention in talks and publications that soil conservation districts are the organizations through which technical assistance is channeled to farmers and ranchers. Soil conservation district officials should be encouraged to also recognize the Service as the principal supplying agency for this type of assistance.
- g. Regular monthly news letters from districts to district cooperators have proved to be an effective means of keeping in contact with them about progress and new developments in conservation. Work unit conservationists should encourage district officials to consider the use of regular news letters.
- h. The matter of Soil Conservation Service-Soil Conservation District relations is of such importance that it should be assigned for committee attention at each annual meeting of state conservationists.

### Urban Groups

With the constant expansion of cities, more and more farm land is being included in incorporated towns and cities. In many areas small farms also are used by people who work in town and use the farm as a means of supplemental income. Many districts are facing the problem of what to do with such lands and also with the problem of how to enlist the assistance from all urban groups.

1. It is recommended that soil conservation districts work with planning boards and other agencies within counties and states that are concerned with problems of industrial and urban development and related land zoning. This will provide an opportunity for districts to point out to such groups the importance of considering land capability information in zoning lands for other than agricultural use.
2. Agricultural lands located in incorporated towns and cities should receive the same treatment and consideration as farm lands outside when district enabling acts permit. Owners of lands that have been earmarked for conversion to other uses in the near future should receive counsel and guidance that would result in the best land use and in the best soil and water conservation.
3. The Soil Stewardship Program is one good way of bringing urban groups into play in the soil conservation district program, as well as all other people.
4. Urban people particularly should understand and appreciate the importance of wildlife and recreational benefits from soil and water conservation work done by soil conservation districts. A large segment of the urban population is tremendously interested in this phase of work and their knowledge of what is being done about it would greatly improve the working relations between soil conservation districts, urban groups, and the Service.
5. Where water use, storage and management is a vital item, urban groups should be invited to join with districts to effectuate a complete soil and water conservation program of small watershed projects.

The Committee wishes to express appreciation to Nolan Fuqua, Bill Richards, Waters Davis, Clair Guess, and Marion Monk of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Ray Heinen and T. L. Gaston of the Soil Conservation Service, Washington Office; and to the state conservationists for their suggestions and assistance in preparing this report.

Washington, D. C.  
September 24-28, 1956





